

Legislative Testimony

House Bill 7159, An Act Updating the Scope of Practice of Optometry Public Health Committee March 5, 2007

Jeannette DeJesús
Hispanic Health Council

Senator Handley, Representative Sayers and members of the Public Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to write to your Committee today. My name is Jeannette DeJesús, I am the President & CEO of the Hispanic Health Council. I wish to indicate my support for **H.B. 7159, An Act Updating the Scope of Practice of Optometry**. The mission of the Hispanic Health Council is to improve the health and social well being of Latinos and other underserved communities through community-based research, direct service, training and advocacy.

H.B. 7159 updates the 1996 the law which gave authority to Optometric Doctors to treat glaucoma, a serious and progressive eye disease that, if left untreated, can cause blindness. Updating the law will increase the scope of services that optometrists can provide to patients with glaucoma - making it easier for patients with glaucoma to access the care they need.

In a report recently released by the Hispanic Health Council, *A Profile of Latino Health in Connecticut*, we identified barriers to quality health care as major factors influencing health and wellbeing. Optometrists currently provide approximately 70% of all primary Eyecare exams in the state. By increasing the scope of services that optometrists can offer their clients we will be allowing patients more direct access to services and treatment through a group of medical professionals with whom many patients already have working relationships.

Lack of access to quality health care is a significant problem faced by many people throughout the state. Increasing the number of qualified providers that patients can turn to is an important step in increasing access to quality health care in Connecticut.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to communicate with you today.